

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

DAY OF SERVICE, JANUARY 16, 2012

Corporation for
**NATIONAL &
COMMUNITY
SERVICE**



“Life’s most persistent and urgent question is: What are you doing for others?”

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. devoted his life to advancing equality, social justice, and opportunity for all. He challenged us to build a more perfect union and taught us that everyone has a role to play in making America what it ought to be. With his leadership, our nation made great strides against racial discrimination and toward increased civil rights.

More than 40 years after his death, Dr. King’s examples can continue to guide us in addressing our nation’s most critical issues today. Each of us can contribute to strengthening our own communities by serving in Dr. King’s honor on the King Holiday and throughout the year. And, by making service part of our daily lives, we can help realize Dr. King’s dream. Together, we can ensure that more young people graduate from high school; that Americans of all ages have healthier futures; consume less energy; support our military families and veterans; and that we increase employment, financial stability, and affordable housing for vulnerable individuals and families.

What Is the MLK Day of Service?

After a long struggle, legislation was signed in 1983 creating a federal holiday marking the birthday of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The federal holiday was first observed in 1986. In 1994, Congress designated the holiday as a national day of service and charged the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) with leading this effort. Taking place each third Monday in January, the MLK Day of Service is the only federal holiday observed as a national day of service – a “day on, not a day off.” The MLK Day of Service empowers individuals, strengthens communities, bridges barriers, addresses social problems, and moves us closer to Dr. King’s vision of a “Beloved Community.”

Why Serve on MLK Day?

Dr. King recognized the power of service to strengthen communities and achieve common goals. Service is integral to meeting national

challenges on issues such as disaster services, education, economic opportunities, environmental stewardship, healthy futures, and supporting veterans and military families.

In addition to helping solve serious problems, service brings people from different backgrounds together, and benefits those who serve. On MLK Day, it is especially fitting that Americans come together in service that not only honors Dr. King, but builds lasting change in communities.

What Types of Service Are Encouraged?

All types of service are encouraged, particularly projects that connect participants to ongoing service throughout the year, have a lasting impact and build the capacity of an organization to generate volunteers, raise funds, or launch new projects. The most successful projects are those that connect to the life and teachings of Dr. King and include time to reflect upon them.

Who Can Participate in the MLK Day of Service?

People of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities are encouraged to serve on King Day, and to make the day the beginning of an ongoing commitment to a cause that is meaningful to them and addresses a need in their communities.

How Can I Continue to Serve After MLK Day?

Start by connecting your MLK Day activities to the work you are doing year round. The Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service is an opportunity to shine a spotlight on the great work that is already happening in your community and kick-off a year of service.

As part of his United We Serve initiative, President Obama has called upon all Americans to make service a part of their daily lives. Where and how you serve is up to you – the important thing is to get involved. Visit MLKDay.gov to find a volunteer opportunity in your community and for ideas on planning your own project.

2011 Highlights

Hundreds of thousands of Americans of all ages and backgrounds joined in volunteer service projects across the country on the 2011 Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service. President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama joined cabinet secretaries, governors, mayors, nonprofit and business leaders, students, families, and others in honoring Dr. King's legacy through service projects addressing a multitude of pressing social issues from poverty and illiteracy to hunger to homelessness.

For MLK Day 2011, the Corporation for National and Community Service launched the MLK Drum Majors for Service to recognize those helping hands who perform

extraordinary acts of service, but who seldom receive recognition. Honorees receive an official President's Volunteer Service Award lapel pin, a personalized certificate of achievement, and a congratulatory letter from the President of the United States. For more information visit MLKDay.gov/awards.

MLK Day of Service Grantees and Partners

Each year CNCS awards grants to organizations to develop and coordinate service projects on the MLK Day of Service. The 2012 grants competition will soon be announced so start thinking of what you will do to honor Dr. King through service.

CNCS and The King Center lead the MLK Day of Service in partnership with numerous national nonprofit organizations, faith-based and community groups, state service commissions, government agencies, educational institutions, and corporations and businesses. For a list of partners, visit MLKDay.gov.

Other Resources

A wide variety of free MLK Day resources for individuals and organizations are available at MLKDay.gov.

These include:

- ★ Tool to register your MLK Day project
- ★ Tool to find a MLK Day project
- ★ Action Guides — step-by-step instructions for planning a project that will have lasting impact.
- ★ Tips & Tools to support: collaborations, media, marketing, fundraising, volunteer development
- ★ Webinars
- ★ Weekly newsletter

To register your MLK Day project, go to MLKDay.gov and click 'register your project.'

For More Information, visit MLKDay.gov or e-mail MLKDay@cns.gov.